

Reflection Questions

- What thoughts of gratitude come to mind as you consider your recovery journey and preparation for Christmas?
- Are you hiding anything behind the walls of anxiety, mistrust, and isolation?
- Are you happy, joyous, and free?

Have a Blessed Advent!

The Advent Season is a great opportunity to reflect upon the space we make for Jesus Christ. A few ways to directly confront the road blocks that get in our way of knowing loving, and serving our Lord include:

- Participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation between now and Christmas Day
- Serving those less fortunate over the upcoming weeks
- Fasting from a habit, behavior, or substance

Sunday Mass Readings This Week

1st Reading: Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10

2nd Reading: James 5:7-10

Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11

3rd Sunday of Advent



As people in recovery, we await the coming of our Lord with expectant hope. We witness God do miraculous things on a daily basis, and the readings for the Third Sunday of Advent remind us to delight in His presence. The First Reading sets the tone for an attitude of renewal:

*The desert and the parched land will exult;
the steppe will rejoice and bloom.
They will bloom with abundant flowers,
and rejoice with joyful song.*

*Strengthen the hands that are feeble,
make firm the knees that are weak,
say to those whose hearts are frightened:
Be strong, fear not!
Here is your God,
he comes with vindication;
with divine recompense
he comes to save you.
Then will the eyes of the blind be opened,
the ears of the deaf be cleared;
then will the lame leap like a stag,
then the tongue of the mute will sing.*

This tone is a major shift from the story many of us tell ourselves as we begin the journey of recovery. In our battle with active addiction, we've come to know spiritual poverty. As the cycle of addiction unfolds, the solution to our problems becomes the problem, and our anxiety, mistrust, and isolation build. We get discouraged as we begin hiding some of our true needs from ourselves and others, often leaving us resentful and afraid.

By the grace of God, we've been uprooted and given another chance. We begin to experience the peace of Christ and the freedom that accompanies 12-step recovery. This is very good news as we await the coming of our Lord with patient trust. This week's Second Reading guides our efforts to endure whatever we may face:

*Be patient, brothers and sisters,
until the coming of the Lord.
See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of
the earth,
being patient with it
until it receives the early and the late rains.
You too must be patient.
Make your hearts firm,
because the coming of the Lord is at hand.
Do not complain, brothers and sisters, about one
another,
that you may not be judged.
Behold, the Judge is standing before the gates.
Take as an example of hardship and patience,
brothers and sisters,
the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.*

Upon being awoken to the Good News, it is natural for us to ask the same question the crowds of people ask John the Baptist in this week's gospel reading—*what should we do?* Showing kindness to all and allowing God to do His will in us, with us, and through us is a good start. Setting aside self-seeking expectations provides an opportunity for God to make all things new.

Luke's Gospel tells us a bit more about John the Baptist:

*Now the people were filled with expectation, and all
were asking in their hearts
whether John might be the Christ.
John answered them all, saying,
I am baptizing you with water,
but one mightier than I is coming.
I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals.
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

Surrender does not always come naturally, but if we exercise the first three steps of recovery through the lens of our baptism, we might experience it happen supernaturally. We can cooperate with the transformation process by working the remaining steps—taking a moral inventory, sharing it with others, asking God to remove defects of character that stand in the way of our usefulness to Him and others, and making amends. Along the way, we get to know peace, joy, and freedom thanks to the saving grace of God.